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LAURA ARNOLD

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Four undocumented languages of Raja Ampat, West Papua, Indonesia

Laura Arnold

University of Edinburgh

Summary

Salawati, Batta, Biga, and As are four undocumented Austronesian languages belonging to the Raja Ampat-South Halmahera branch of South Halmahera-West New Guinea, spoken in West Papua province, Indonesia. Salawati, Batta, and Biga are spoken in the Raja Ampat archipelago, just off the western tip of the Bird's Head peninsula of New Guinea, and As is spoken nearby on the New Guinea mainland. All four languages are to some degree endangered, as speakers shift to Papuan Malay, the local lingua franca: Biga is the most vital of the four languages, in that children are still acquiring it, whereas As is moribund, with only a handful of speakers remaining. Very little previous literature is available for any of the languages.

1. Introduction

The Raja Ampat archipelago lies just off the western tip of the Bird's Head peninsula of New Guinea, in West Papua Province, Indonesia. It is comprised of four large islands – Waigeo, Batanta, Salawati, and Misool – and hundreds of smaller islands. Administratively, most of Raja Ampat forms the Raja Ampat regency; the southern half of Salawati, along with the adjacent areas of the Bird's Head, form the Sorong regency.

This paper gives up-to-date demographic, sociolinguistic, and cultural information on four undocumented Austronesian languages spoken in and around Raja Ampat: the Salawati varieties [xmx]; Batta [no code]; Biga [bhc]; and As [asz]. This information was collected during a recent survey trip (November 2019-January 2020), in which I spent 1-2 weeks collecting data in each of the following villages: Sakabu on Salawati (to collect data on the Salawati variety Butlih), Yenenas on Batanta (Batta), Biga on Misool (Biga), and Asbaken on the Bird's Head peninsula (As). Figure 1 shows the location of these villages, as well as the local regency capitals Sorong and Waisai.

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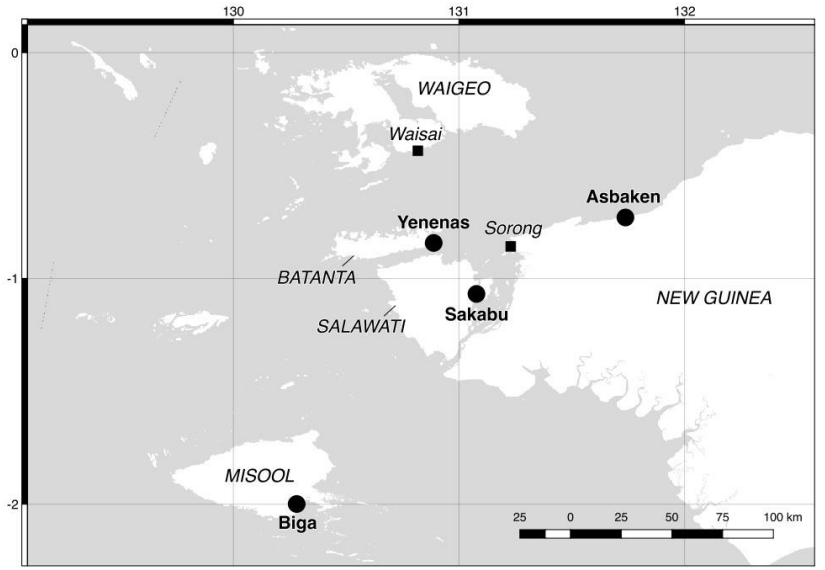

Figure 1. The Raja Ampat archipelago and western tip of the Bird's Head peninsula, with the location of the field sites

All four languages belong to the South Halmahera-West New Guinea (SHWNG) subbranch of Austronesian; within SHWNG, they belong to the Raja Ampat-South Halmahera subbranch (RASH, see Kamholz 2014). As well as Raja Ampat, RASH languages are also spoken in the south of Halmahera and nearby islands, approximately 350km to the west. Other languages spoken in Raja Ampat include Ambel [wgo], Maʿya [slz], and Matbat [xmt] (all RASH); dialects of Biak [bhw] (a non-RASH SHWNG language);[1] the non-Austronesian language Seget [sbg] (West Bird's Head family);[2] and varieties of Malay, in particular Papuan Malay (Kluge 2017). Historically, Maʿya and Biak were the lingua francas throughout the

[1] According to oral tradition, the Biak arrived in Raja Ampat from Cenderawasih Bay in the west some 500 years ago (Andaya 1993: 104; see also notes below on migration patterns). The varieties of Biak spoken in Raja Ampat are reported by locals to be somewhat different to the Biak spoken in Cenderawasih Bay (as described, for example, in van den Heuvel 2006, and Mofu 2008).

[2] Polansky (1957, cited in Remijsen 2001a: 30) reports that there is a non-Austronesian language Duriankere [dbn] spoken in Duriankari village in south Salawati; de Vries (1998: 644) indicates that the language may now be extinct. I have no further information to add.

archipelago; however, Malay has now become the dominant language. This is due in part to language shift by local communities, and in part to a recent increase in migrants to the area from further west in Indonesia, both through the government's *transmigrasi* policy, and because of the rapidly-growing tourist industry throughout the archipelago.

The internal classification of the RASH subbranch is a work in progress. Based on two morphological innovations, the RASH languages spoken in southern Halmahera clearly form a primary branch of RASH (Kamholz 2014). However, it is not yet known whether the RASH languages spoken in and near Raja Ampat form a separate primary branch. In Kamholz (2014), the RASH languages of Raja Ampat are classified into several primary branches: Ambel-Biga, Maʿya-Matbat, Fiawat [Salawati], and As.[3] However, in a reconstruction of proto-SHWNG morphology, Kamholz (2015) suggests the Maʿya-Matbat branch may not be valid;[4] and Kamholz (2017: 10 f.n.4) has withdrawn the Ambel-Biga branch. The main obstacle in classifying these languages has been the lack of available data – as discussed below, this was one of the primary motivations for the survey trip reported here.

There is very little previous literature available on any of the four surveyed languages. Berry & Berry (1987) includes a wordlist of As, and Smits & Voorhoeve (1992) includes wordlists of As, Biga, and several of the Salawati varieties (which they identify as dialects of Maʿya; see below). Remijsen (2001a) contains wordlists and scant morphological information on Biga and Fiawat (one of the Salawati varieties). Finally, Kamholz (2016) includes some recently-collected lexical data from Biga, Batta, and As. Other RASH languages spoken in Raja Ampat have been better studied: descriptions, archives, substantial lexical material, and/or analytic materials are available for Ambel (Arnold 2017, 2018a, b, 2019), Maʿya (van der Leeden 1983, 1993, n.d.; Remijsen 2001a, b, 2002), and Matbat (Remijsen 2001a, 2007, 2010, 2015).

Typologically, all four of the surveyed languages are very similar. While the segmental inventories are quite simple (distinguishing 14-16 consonants, and five or six vowels), the four languages additionally have systems of lexical tone (typically distinguishing two or three tones on word-final

[3] Data from Batta were unavailable at the time of his classification.

[4] Although see Arnold (2018c), who presents evidence from tonal innovations for a branch including Maʿya and Matbat to the exclusion of Ambel.

syllables).[5] All four languages are head-marking with basic SV/AVP word order, and the subject of verbal clauses is marked on the verb via prefixes and/or infixes. NPs are mainly head-initial, with a morphosyntactic alienability distinction in possessive constructions. Adpositions are mainly prepositional, with the occasional postposition; negation and most aspect and mode markers are clause-final.

2. The languages

Language:	Salawati (also known as 'Maden')
ISO 639-3 code:	xmx
Glottolog code:	made1253
Population:	less than 3,391
Location:	-1.116457, 130.866667
Vitality rating:	Ethnologue: EGIDS 6b; own assessment: EGIDS 7

I propose the name 'Salawati' here to refer to several closely-related varieties spoken on Salawati Island: Butlih (also referred to in the literature as 'Butles' or 'Butleh'), Wail (a.k.a. 'Wailil'), Fiat (a.k.a. 'Fiawat'), Rajau, Tepin (a.k.a. 'Tipin'), and Kawit. A detailed map of Salawati, showing where each of the varieties is spoken, is given in Figure 2. Note that Fiat was also once spoken in the village of Fiawat, to the north of Samate, which no longer exists; speakers have now moved to Mucu. I was also told that the variety of the now-abandoned village of Pakon, to the south of Sakabu, is called Holo, and that speakers of Holo now live in Sakabu and surrounding villages. The villages of Wailabu, Waijan, and Waimeci are not associated with any particular variety; speakers of Seget and Javanese (see below) also live in these villages.

I should note that the map I had of southern Salawati (i.e. the areas of Salawati that are administratively part of the Sorong regency) appears to be

[5] While tone is an unusual feature for Austronesian, it is common in Raja Ampat: Ambel, Matbat, and Maʿya are all tonal. Several SHWNG languages spoken in the region of Cenderawasih Bay are also tonal: Moor, Yerisiam, Yaur (Kamholz 2014); Roon (Gil 2019); and possibly Wooi (Himmelmann 2018: 370 f.n. 19), and Waropen (van Velzen 1994, n.d.). Tone, however, cannot be reconstructed to proto-SHWNG (Kamholz 2014); it is thought to have developed independently several times in SHWNG, in at least some cases through contact with tonal non-Austronesian languages of the area (Kamholz 2017, Arnold 2018c).

outdated – several of the villages on the map were not recognised by people in Sakabu village, and many of the village names in the 2017 government population records of the region (available at https://sorongkab.bps.go.id/) do not appear on my map.

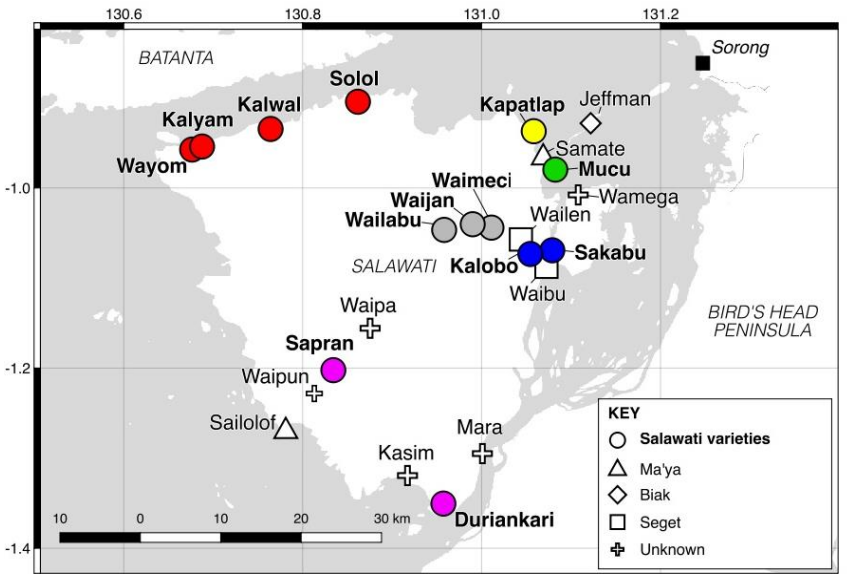

Figure 2. The languages of Salawati island.

The coloured circles indicate the following Salawati varieties: Red – Tepin; Yellow – Wail; Green – Fiat and Rajau; Blue – Butlih; Magenta – Kawit; Grey – Several different varieties.

The linguistic situation of the Salawati varieties is unclear, in that it is unknown whether these are dialects of a single language, or belong to two separate languages. Remijsen (2001a:26-28) is a detailed review of what has been said about these varieties. In summary: Polansky (1957) distinguishes two languages (one spoken in southwest Salawati, corresponding to Kawit, and one spoken in the north and northeast, corresponding to the other varieties); van der Leeden (1993), Wurm (2007), and Eberhard et al. (2020)

only recognise one (referred to as 'Maden' in the two latter sources);[6] and Smits & Voorhoeve (1992) identify Kawit, Fiat ('Fiawat'), Wail ('Wailil') and Tepin as dialects of Maˈya.

During the fieldwork reported here, I was based in Sakabu, and also spent a little time in Kalobo and Mucu. In these villages, I collected lexical, morphological, and syntactic data from Butlih, and a little lexical data from Rajau and Fiat. From these data, these three varieties appear to be closely-related dialects, with some minor regular phonological differences. The data are also enough to confirm that these varieties are not dialects of Maˈya; this is supported by speaker attitudes, in that they also distinguish their language from Maˈya.

Speakers of these three dialects identified the other varieties listed above (viz. Wail, Tepin, and Kawit) as dialects of the same language, and told me that they are mutually intelligible with their varieties – lexical differences in names for flora and fauna were identified as the biggest difference. However, these judgements should not necessarily be taken at face value: in my experience working in the area, local emic language boundaries tend to be drawn along socio-ethnic, rather than linguistic lines (e.g. whether speakers consider themselves to be part of the same tribe), and the threshold for a language to be considered mutually intelligible is often much lower than expected (e.g. a minimal amount of shared core vocabulary).[7] Data from the three undocumented varieties of Salawati are required to resolve this question.

As can be seen from this map, besides the question of the Salawati varieties, the language situation on Salawati is very complex, with speakers of Maˈya in Samate and Sailolof, Biak in Jeffman, and Seget in at least

[6] None of the speakers with whom I worked recognised the name 'Maden'; the only source other than Glottolog and Ethnologue in which this name is mentioned is Polansky (1957:8, cited in Remijsen 2001a: 27), who says that the Moi people of the New Guinea mainland call the people of Sakabu 'Madin'. I therefore suggest that the term is abandoned.

[7] For example, during my fieldwork with Ambel speakers on Waigeo, I was often told that Ambel is the 'same' language as Maˈya, and that they are mutually intelligible. However, these attitudes appear to be linked to the fact that the Ambel are considered a 'sub-tribe' of the larger Maˈya tribe: interactions I witnessed between Ambel and Maˈya speakers indicated that the two languages are not in fact mutually intelligible. In addition, my travelling companion during this survey trip, a native speaker of Ambel, told his Ambel friends and family that the language As, described below, is the 'same' as Ambel, based on a couple of similar sentences.

Wailen and Waibu.[8] This reflects many separate waves of migration to the island over the centuries: linguistic evidence, which correlates with local oral history, points to a Waigeo origin for speakers of Maʿya (Remijsen 2001a). Biak speakers, found throughout the Raja Ampat archipelago, originate from Biak island in Cenderawasih Bay, and speakers of Seget originate from the west of the Bird's Head peninsula, where both Seget itself and the other members of the West Bird's Head family (Moi, Kalabra, Moraid, Tehit) are spoken. More recently, migrants from further west in Indonesia have settled on Salawati: in particular in Kalobo (a transmigration village) and its satellites, where speakers of the Salawati varieties, Maʿya, and Seget live alongside large numbers of Javanese speakers.

The Salawati varieties are spoken by populations who originally lived in the interior of the island. These groups moved to the coast in the middle of the 20th century. While I was not able to collect very much information about the oral history of these groups, at least one clan (Demuh) claims an origin from Halmahera.

The speakers of the Salawati varieties are one of what Remijsen (2001a) refers to as the 'land-oriented' groups of Raja Ampat (the others being the Matbat of Misool and the Ambel of Waigeo). They are distinguished from the 'sea-oriented' Maʿya, who have long lived on the coast, focus more on fishing than on sago harvesting, have had long-ranging social and political ties outside of Raja Ampat (for example, with the historical sultanate of Tidore), and who are typically of a less 'Papuan' phenotype than the land-oriented groups. Remijsen also notes that one of the features of the land-oriented groups is that they are Christian, in opposition to the Muslim Maʿya; however, while the speakers of the Salawati varieties in Mucu are Christian (of the Gereja Kristen Injil denomination), those in Kalobo and Sakabu are majority Muslim.[9]

These days, the primary occupation of the Butlih speakers in Sakabu is harvesting timber to sell in Sorong (although people complain both that the market is saturated, and that they are concerned about the ecological impact). Garden produce, seafood, and sago are either kept for personal consumption, or sold in town.

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[8] It is very likely that Seget is also spoken in the villages in the southeast of the island, which is geographically closest to the political district of Seget on the Bird's Head peninsula; however, I do not have any first-hand information on this. Several villages listed in government population records in southeast Salawati (none of which appear on the map I was using – see above) have names that are phonotactically Seget (e.g. Klasof, Klawoton, Klaforo, Klafdalim, Klasari – compare the Seget clan name 'Klasin').

[9] I do not have information on the religion of the speakers in the other villages.

In all three villages visited during this fieldwork, the Salawati varieties are only used on a daily basis by those born before about 1990. Those in their teens appear to have at least a passive command, in that they respond if they are given orders in the language.[10] I was told that children are actively acquiring Tepin in the villages further to the north and west (e.g. Kapatlap, Solol, and Kalyam), although I was not able to observe this first-hand. I have no information about language vitality in the Kawit-speaking villages in the southwest of the island.

The number of speakers of the Salawati varieties is unknown. As shown in Table 1, the overall population of the villages in which these varieties is spoken is at least 3,391.[11] The total speaker population, however, is likely to be substantially lower than this: first, because the younger generations in at least some of the villages are no longer acquiring the varieties; and second, as noted above, because of the large numbers of speakers of other languages living in some of these villages (especially the transmigration village Kalobo and its satellites).

Table 1. Population figures for villages in with Salawati varieties

Village	**Population**
Duriankari	586
Kalobo	315
Kalwal	107
Kalyam	354
Kapatlap	321
Sakabu	327
Samate	517
Sapran	?
Solol	514
Waijan	104
Wailabu	97
Waimeci	131
Wayom	18
TOTAL	3391

[10] It is interesting to note that Remijsen (2001a:28) reports an identical sociolinguistic situation in the former village of Fiawat, just to the north of Samate, almost 20 years ago.

[11] Throughout this paper, village populations are based on figures from a 2017 government survey, publicly available at: https://rajaampatkab.bps.go.id/publication.html (accessed 2020-02-24). I was not able to find population figures for Sapran (which may no longer exist; see above); and the population of Mucu is included in the figures for Samate.

Language:	Batta
ISO 639-3 code:	no code
Glottolog code:	no code
Population:	approximately 150
Location:	-0.872323, 130.770766
Vitality rating:	own assessment: EGIDS 8a

Batta is spoken in three villages on the south coast of Batanta island: Yenenas (population 477), Weyman (population approx 300),[12] and Wailebet (population 294). In each of these villages, about half the population is traditionally Batta-speaking, and the other half is traditionally Biak-speaking. There has been a lot of intermarriage between Batta and Biak speakers in these three villages; several locals have also taken spouses from elsewhere in Raja Ampat or places further afield, such as Seram. All of the other villages on Batanta are Biak. Figure 3 is a linguistic map of Batanta.

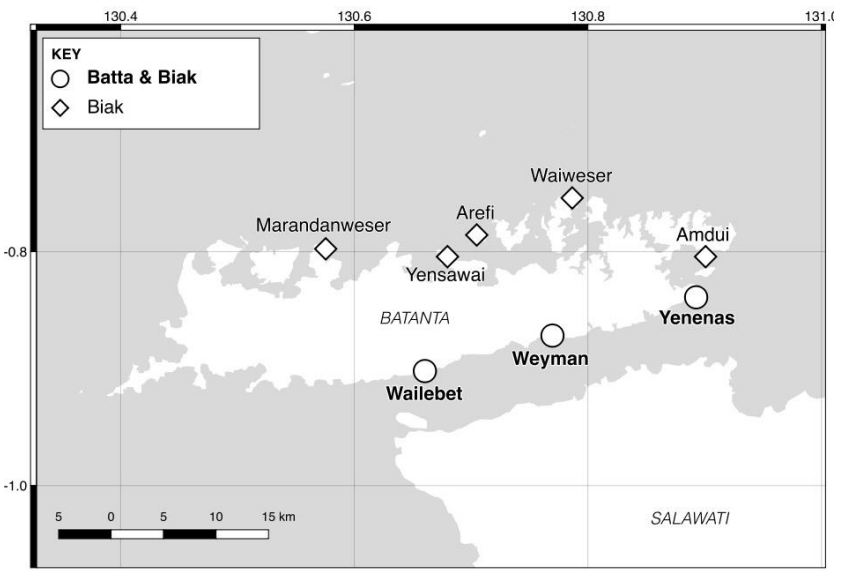

Figure 3. The languages of Batanta

[12] Government population figures are not available for Weyman.

According to local oral history, the original ethnic group of Batanta are called the Olon. They used to live in the interior of the island, but some of them were moved to the coast by a manifestation of the local mythological figure *Manarmakeri*, where they founded the Dey clan.[13] It is said that some of the Olon remained inland, where they continue to live to this day; but that they are now hidden, and only speakers of Batta can meet with them.

Speakers of Biak arrived on Batanta in several separate waves of migration, beginning, according to one consultant, in the 16th century, and continuing until the present day.[14] While some of the later Biak migrants came directly from Biak island in Cenderawasih Bay, others are said to have lived for some time in other areas before arriving on Batanta, for example, in Amberbaken and Sausapor on the north of the Bird's Head, Inanwatan on the south of the Bird's Head, Kofiau island to the west of Batanta, and the west coast of Waigeo island in the north of Raja Ampat. While earlier waves of Biak adopted Batta as their language of daily communication (the socioethnic label 'Batta' is in fact used to refer to the Batta-speaking Biak incomers, as opposed to the native Olon), later migrants did not assimilate linguistically.

The primary occupation of the population in Yenenas is fishing; the villagers are generally, by their own admission, not particularly keen on harvesting sago, and instead tend to rely on imported rice as their staple food. Gaffney & Tanudirjo (2019) report that the Biak villages Yensawai and Arefi, on the north coast of Batanta, were historically two major centres for manufacturing sago oven pottery in Raja Ampat. In terms of religion, all groups on Batanta are Christian (Gereja Kristen Injil); Christianity arrived in Yenenas in 1946. There is a strong taboo amongst the Batta speakers against opposite-sex siblings sharing food, drink, or betel fruit (although not the areca nut itself), lest the they fall sick.

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[13] Manarmakeri is one of the major hero figures of Biak mythology (Thimme 1977; Rutherford 1999). An old man with scabies who cannot find a wife, he magically impregnates a woman; when the woman's son identifies Manarmakeri as his father, he transforms himself into a beautiful young man by leaping into a fire. Eventually Manarmakeri and his family are chased away by their fellow villagers, and travel into the west; it is said that he will one day return again. Manarmakeri also features in some versions of the origin myth of the Raja Ampat islands as told by the Maʻya and one Ambel clan, in that the woman he impregnated is said to have been the sister of the four ancestral kings of the archipelago (van der Leeden 1989; Arnold 2017). The Batta consultant with whom I worked claimed a Batanta origin for Manarmakeri.

[14] Interestingly, this consultant noted that the arrival of the first Biak in the 16th century was 'before [the time of] the Tidore sultanate'. The ascension of power of Tidore in the area is not on the historical record, as they were already in power by the time of the arrival of the first Europeans in 1512; but if his estimation is correct, this suggests it occurred around the same time.

Batta was reported by Remijsen (2001a: 28) to possibly be extinct. This is certainly not the case; however, it is highly endangered. Along with the low speaker numbers, Batta is only used on a daily basis by those born before approximately 1980. While many older Batta speakers also know the local variety of Biak, the primary language of all Batta generations is now Papuan Malay. Speakers of Batta are particularly enthusiastic about collaborating on documentation of their language, with several speakers saying they would be keen to be involved. Unfortunately the last two people who knew how to sing the traditional Batta *wor* songs died a couple of years ago.

Batta may be a dialect of the (northern) Salawati varieties, discussed above: several speakers told me that their language is the same as that spoken in the Tepin-speaking Salawati villages across the Sagewin Strait, and that there is mutual intelligibility. However, the same caveats discussed above regarding local attitudes concerning what makes a language 'same' or 'different' apply here, and a preliminary inspection of the linguistic data from Batta and the Butlih dialect of Salawati reveals some not-insignificant lexical, phonological, morphological, and syntactic differences between these two varieties. If Batta and Tepin are indeed dialects of a single language, and if Tepin and Butlih are also dialects of this language, this would suggest a dialect continuum stretching across northeast and north Salawati and into Batanta, with no mutual intelligibility between the dialects at the extremes. A conclusive answer to this question awaits further research. Crucially, data from the other Salawati dialects are required, particularly those that are geographically intermediate (i.e., Wail and Tepin).

Language:	Biga
ISO 639-3 code:	bhc
Glottolog code:	biga1238
Population:	approximately 300
Location:	-2.017855, 139.269037
Vitality rating:	Ethnologue: EGIDS 6b; own assessment: EGIDS 6b

Biga is spoken in a single village of the same name on south Misool island (population 334). Other languages spoken on Misool include Matbat, and the Misool dialect of Maʻya. In some of the villages, recent migrants from the Tanimbar islands, the Halmahera archipelago, and Cenderawasih Bay have brought their own languages with them. A linguistic map of Misool is given in Figure 4.

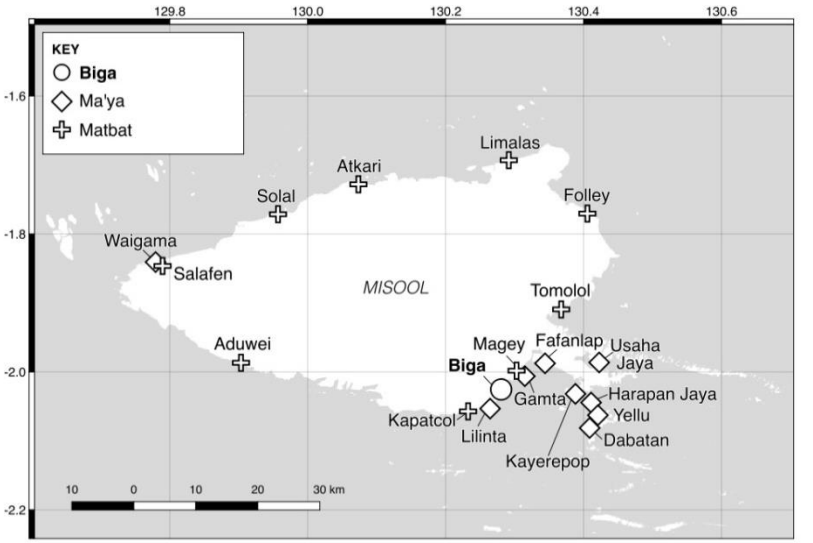

Figure 4. The languages of Misool

According to their oral history, the Biga are relatively recent incomers to Misool, having left Waigeo in north Raja Ampat some 300 years ago. Of the six Biga clans, three are said to originate from the north-west coast of Waigeo, in the area where the Maʿya dialect Kawe is spoken, and three left from the Ambel-speaking area of Mayalibit Bay in the interior of Waigeo. On arrival to Misool, the Biga incomers negotiatied with the Matbat clans they met there, who are the traditional land owners of the area, for rights to hunt, fish, plant gardens, and harvest sago in the area where present-day Biga is located.

The Biga are important sago producers in the area, a socioeconomic role that is reflected in the name *Biga* (*bi* 'sago' + *ga* 'place'). They are Christians (Gereja Kristen Injil), and have been since their conversion in 1924 by missionaries from Seram.[15] Remijsen (2001a: 169-170) notes that the Biga constitute a notable exception to his 'sea-oriented' versus 'land-oriented' distinction, discussed above: they are similar to the land-oriented groups, in that they are sago harvesters, Christian, and of a 'Papuan' phenotype; but they are similar to the sea-oriented Maʿya, in that their oral history says that they originate from Waigeo, rather than the interior of the islands. Biga is one of the last remaining villages in Raja Ampat in which the majority of the houses are built in the traditional style, standing on stilts above the sea, as shown in Figure 5.

[15] Biga was apparently the first village on Misool to be Christianised.

Figure 5. Traditional houses in Biga

Biga is the predominant language in Biga village. In addition, all speakers of Biga are fluent in Papuan Malay, and many older people also speak or understand the Misool dialect of Maʽya, and/or Matbat. Of all the Raja Ampat languages I have worked with, Biga is the most vital, in that children are still acquiring it and are active users of the language. However, there are signs that this situation is not stable, and that the speaker community may soon switch to Papuan Malay as their primary language. For example, Biga only appears to be used by children when communicating with their parents or grandparents (and then typically when they are being reprimanded); during the nine days I was in Biga village, I only saw children using Papuan Malay to communicate with their peers.

Language:	As
ISO 639-3 code:	asz
Glottolog code:	asss1237
Population:	5 or 6
Location:	-0.742007, 131.683156
Vitality rating:	Ethnologue: EGIDS 6a; own assessment: EGIDS 8b

As is spoken in the village of Asbaken, nestled on a white-sand bay at the mouth of a small river, on the north coast of the Bird's Head peninsula. The Klin variety of Moi [mxn] is widely spoken throughout the area, particularly by older generations, including in Asbaken. As with all of the other villages surveyed during this trip, the whole population of Asbaken is also fluent in Papuan Malay.

The population of Asbaken is approximately 300. Of these, I estimate that perhaps 45 are ethnically As, and the remaining 255 are ethnically Moi.[16] While the As are Muslim, the Moi are Christian. There is a very friendly relationship between the two communities: the villagers help each other in preparations for celebrations of holy days, and intermarriage is common. This good relationship is attested by the mosque and the church of the village, which face each other on the shore of the bay (Figure 6): when, a few years ago, the Moi planned to build a larger church inland, the As insisted that the church remained on the shore near the mosque, so they could continue to worship alongside each other.

Figure 6. The church and the mosque in Asbaken

[16] These figures are based on my own observations. Note that I estimate that approximately 15% of Asbaken are As; this is lower than the 30% observed by Berry & Berry (1987: 60).

There is some disagreement in the oral history about the origins of the As. While one consultant I spoke with told me that the As originally came to the New Guinea mainland from Halmahera, a second told me they originate from Samate village on Salawati. In Berry & Berry (1987:50), the homeland of the As is reported to be Gag island, off the west coast of Waigeo.[17] However, everyone I spoke to agreed that the As were sent to New Guinea by the sultan of Tidore to bring Islam to the area.[18] Several people noted that, on the arrival of the As in the area, the Moi were still living in family-oriented groups in the interior.

Both the As and the Moi of Asbaken sustain themselves with fruit and vegetables from their gardens, alongside fish and other sea produce; they also rear goats to sell in Sorong. The Moi are the main sago producers of the village. The main livelihood of the As is forging machetes, which are then sold in Sorong.

While Berry & Berry (1987) reported around 300 speakers of As in 1986, the language is now moribund. Only five fluent speakers remain in Asbaken, with a sixth reported to be living in Sorong. All are very elderly, and none use As for day-to-day conversation. In addition, there are at least another two elderly semi-speakers in Asbaken. Historically, there were also speakers of As in the nearby villages of Malaumkarta and Mega; while I did not have the opportunity to visit these villages, I was told that the language is no longer spoken there. The generation below the remaining speakers are very keen to produce legacy materials of their language, in particular a dictionary, before it becomes completely extinct. While some older members of the As community speak Moi, the primary language of the As is now Papuan Malay.

3. Future research and recommendations

This survey was carried out in the context of a postdoctoral project at the University of Edinburgh, *Synchronic and diachronic investigations in Raja Ampat-South Halmahera, a little-known subbranch of Austronesian*, funded by the British Academy

[17] These three origins are not in fact mutually exclusive: it may be that the As originally came from Halmahera, and stopped off at Gag and in Samate, before arriving at present-day Asbaken.

[18] The precise date of these migrations is unknown. As noted in footnote 14, the Tidore sultanate was already established by the time of the arrival of the first Europeans in the area in 1512, and continued until the mid-nineteenth century (Huizinga 1998; Swadling 2019).

(PF19\100004). In this project, I am carrying out survey fieldwork, in order to collect basic lexical, morphological, and syntactic data from the undocumented RASH languages. The primary data collected in this project will be archived with Edinburgh DataShare (https://datashare.is.ed.ac.uk/). Besides providing a basic documentary record of these languages, the aims of the project are threefold:

1. to analyse the word-prosodic systems of the RASH languages, some of which are cross-linguistically unusual (see Remijsen 2001a, 2007);
2. to investigate the fundamental frequency of vowels in RASH languages, which may help to explain how tonogenesis occurred in these languages, and contribute to theories on the development of tone (see Arnold 2019); and
3. to subclassify RASH and reconstruct proto-RASH, thus furthering our understanding of human history in this little-known region.

This survey fieldwork has also been valuable in that it allows us to identify those languages which are most in danger of extinction, and which would benefit most from a full audio-visual documentation. Based on the information collected to date, as much data as possible, elicited or otherwise, must be collected from As as a matter of priority, before the last remaining speakers pass away. Batta is a prime candidate for a full documentation: not only is it highly endangered, but, as noted above, many of the speakers are enthusiastic about such a project. At least some of the Salawati varieties are also endangered, and documentation is highly recommended, particularly of the oral history of these groups. Surveys are also required in the Wail, Tepin, and Kawit villages, both to assess the vitality of these varieties, and to resolve the question of the language situation on Salawati. While Biga is the least endangered of the four languages surveyed, a deeper investigation of the interesting cultural position of its speakers, between the land-oriented and sea-oriented groups of Raja Ampat, would likely reveal much about the history of this beautiful and mysterious archipelago.

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